

Name of person Interviewed: Kevin Dawson [KD]

Facts about this person:

Age: 66

Sex: Male

Occupation: Owner of settlement house

Home port:

Residence: Fairhaven

Ethnic background: Newfoundland

Interviewer: Janice Fleuriel [JGF]

Transcriber: Sarah Smith

Place interview took place: Harbor Development Corporation

Date and time of interview: September 24, 2005

INDEX / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: Settlement house; regulations; licenses; net making; superstitions; free enterprise; consolidation

INDEX:

[00:00]

Settlement house owner; grew up in Brooklyn; parents emigrated from New Foundland; father was running trawlers out of Fulton Fish Market; with the advent of freezer truck New Bedford was easier for trawlers to go to; they moved to Fairhaven when he was ten; started working on boats when he got older painting; liked working on boats; born in 1939

[03:06]

Fairhaven was very different from Brooklyn; was an easy adjustment for him; had a net business in high school; started working as a fish lumper in high school; always had to help his father mending nets; when they used sisal twine they needed a lot of people to repair it because of chafing and rot; made nets for his father out of sisal twine; Isaw Levine from New Bedford invented nylon nets; saved a lot of work for the industry

[06:05]

After that companies started making nylon twine; sisal is some kind of organic material; boats appeared neater with nylon twine because sisal nets needed to be hung from the

mast to dry; men didn't have to spend so much time mending the nets; boats were Eastern rig

[08:22]

Wooden boats in those days; they had their boats built in Thomaston, Maine; boatyard would customize them; had many different names; was young and not involved in picking out names

[11:14]

Would have a christening for a new boat; everyone would go up to Thomaston to celebrate; someone, usually a female, would break a bottle over the bow; father was conservative and they didn't have too many females or pictures of females on the boats; one time he took down a risqué calendar a crewmember had put up; was whistling while mending twine on one of his first voyages – his father told him not to whistle around the crew; father wasn't really superstitious but knew some of his crew were

[14:26]

Crew from a variety of ethnicities; had a Swedish cook, Portuguese engineer, guys from Newfoundland; when you have a good skipper you get good men; takes three things to make a good skipper; have to have a sense about fish, where to find them; some non-commercial fishermen have that too; have to be a good mechanic to keep the boat running; have to have some business sense to know when to go out fishing and when to land your catch; everybody goes out when the weather is good so everyone comes in at the same time; if you sell your fish when everyone sells you won't get a lot of money for it; people tend to wait for the weather to be good before the go out

[17:35]

Was fishing from the fifties through the seventies; went dragging, never went scalloping; fishing is cyclical; fleet used to be more versatile, they would switch back and forth between fishing and scalloping; fish cycles controlled the fishery; didn't overfish or underfish then – it was determined by fish reproductive cycles; determined by water temperature and other factors; would switch to another species when one got scarce; the fisheries conserve themselves

[20:01]

Used to be two guys representing NMFS in New Bedford – you told them where you went fishing; licenses were free; now there are many people working for NMFS; it's a new science and it's not exact; they must be guessing; people making the decisions were picked politically; maybe some of them didn't know anything about fisheries to start; ultimately regulations will be finer than they are now; NMFS scientists did a wonderful job with scallop fishery

[22:43]

Scallop fishery has limited entry; no new licenses; success is because there are fewer people catching scallops; if there was ease of entry everyone would enter the fishery and it would cut down the number of scallops quickly; hard to know if scarcity of groundfish

is overfishing or natural cycle; cycle could be longer than our lifetime; we're in learning phase; downside of regulation is that free enterprise is being erased; can't enter fishery, save money, start a business anymore; now you need capital to enter fishery

[25:01]

Cost of licenses is really high; couple million dollars for a scallop license; average guy can't come down to the waterfront to find his destiny anymore; future is massive fleet operators who have the money to buy up licenses; will be like farming, with few small operators; this part of regulation is difficult to accept; there are people moving into the fishery who are not fishery people; they have finances and clout

[27:29]

Got into settlement business when he first got married because going to sea didn't fit his lifestyle anymore; had worked on Wall Street for a CPA firm; owned a few vessels at the time; eventually settling became a full-time job; settlement house splits up the pay from the catch and subtracts out expenses; owner is increasingly not the captain

[30:39]

Traditionally split was forty percent owner, sixty percent crew, but that's changing; used to have a very strong union but it has faded; overhead has increased in recent years; boat's bills come into settlement house; they make out the checks for the crew; auctions take place now anytime day or night, but they only work standard hours

[34:19]

Took on a partner – business today is called Jardin and Dawson; there are five people that work there; there are around eighty boats; some boats some just for the summer; they do the books for other businesses too; been doing this since the seventies; settlement house gets paid a regular monthly rate; unemployment forms and mail also come through settlement house for distribution

[37:13]

Technology has affected their business a lot; can tally up settlements in twenty minutes that used to take a month; they have specialized software; thinks industry will become more like farm industry; fisheries will be controlled by very few people; fish won't ever be as cheap to the consumer as it is today; scallops are very expensive; regulations propagate this because they need to support an expensive bureaucracy

[39:44]

Doesn't think a young person can advance in the industry; their chances of becoming a proprietor of a business are very limited; plans to give his business to his partner in a few years

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00]

JGF: Good.

KD: Alright.

JGF: Well thank you for your patience.

KD: Nice to be here.

JGF: Good! This is Janice Fleuriel and I'm interviewing Kevin Dawson about... his – I'm just gonna say your involvement in the fishing industry, because...

KD: That's fine.

JGF: ...we have you listed as a settlement house owner, but while we were talking before you have a lot of other experiences. So can you just sort of recap for me what you told about your family history, and...

KD: Alright... Um... we lived in Brooklyn, New York.

JGF: Okay...

KD: My parents immigrated here separately, and married here in New York. They came from New Foundland.

JGF: Yeah?

KD: And... my father was an electrician.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And... uh... after being here for awhile, he went fishing out of New York, and he was running trawlers out of the Fulton Fish Market. And then... about... in 194... 1949 I think, with the advent of the freezer trucks, coming from New Bedford to Fulton Fish Market, New Bedford was a... easier port for the trawlers to go to.

JGF: Okay, yup.

KD: And so we moved up here.

JGF: Yup. So they were fishing off Georges Bank, probably...

KD: Yes.

JGF: Yup, mm hmmm...

KD: And, uh, we moved up here and settled in Fairhaven.

JGF: And how old were you then?

KD: I was in the fourth grade, which probably makes you about ten.

JGF: Yeah?

KD: Or something like that.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: Yup, I had two brothers and three sisters.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And so... at – after that, we became acquainted with the industry because we could see the boats, and uh, we were constantly going back and forth to the pier with my father and going down at night, pumping out boats, and... and as time went on, my father had four or five boats that he owned and operated, and uh... as we grew up we worked on them.

JGF: Hmm... Wow.

KD: Went fishing.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: Worked on the waterfront, that kind of thing.

JGF: Yeah... wh... how old – do you remember sort of how old – were you around ten when you started working on the boats, or would it have been a little older?

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Yeah, what would you do as a ten year old, what could you do to help?

KD: Well, we were uh... um... shanghai-ed to paint...

JGF: Okay... [laughs]

KD: You know, at a young age you – you don't have to be a very good painter to paint fishing boats.

JGF: True! [laughs] There's a lot of open space.

KD: You know, pen board... pen boards and things like that, and fish holds. So, that's the kind of thing we did and we learned how to splice wire and make nets, and fix engines, and fix bollerts...

JGF: Wow...

KD: And that kind of thing.

JGF: Wow. Did you enjoy it or were you just...?

KD: Yeah, I did. I have brothers who are more, uh... on the intellectual side who didn't appreciate it, but...

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: Yeah, I liked it very much, yeah.

JGF: Yeah? Interesting... Okay, and I know you mentioned, but – did you say – what year were you born just to sort of put context...

KD: I was born in 1939.

JGF: Okay. Okay, so it would have been around '50... '49, '50, you said, when you came up here.

KD: Right...

JGF: Right...

KD: Right...

[03:06]

JGF: Did... I – I've never of course seen Brooklyn to speak of, but it must have felt very different to you at first, or did it – when you moved to Fairhaven?

KD: Yeah, it was different, and it was kind of like living in the country.

JGF: Yeah!

KD: You know, compared to living in New York City.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: Yeah, Brooklyn – we lived in brick row houses.

JGF: Uh huh.

KD: In those days, you know.

JGF: And was that a hard adjustment, or did you like it?

KD: No, it didn't... it was...a fairly easy adjustment for me.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: Right? Yeah...

JGF: Yeah... interesting... okay... I know you said in high school you said you had a net business...

KD: Yeah... I uh... in high school of course I worked as a fish lumper, went fishing with my father, and uh... during the winter years I started a... a net business, making nets. Of course I look – I started that with my father because we used to make all of his nets...

JGF: Ah hah...

KD: There was never an idle hand in my house.

JGF: Oh, okay.

KD: At nighttime we were making nets in the kitchen or the cellar or wherever we had rigged up a stay to tie the twine to.

JGF: Right.

KD: And, uh... it was kind of an interesting thing to experience, because... um... it came to my mind up in Newfoundland recently when I guess they had a... the Matthew I think sailed from Europe to – landed in Newfoundland, and I was there, and a few days after Queen Elizabeth was there, and I noticed that all of the rigging on these boats was sisal twine, and they were bringing down, uh, skids of, uh, sisal twine, and it was – it made me think that how could they use that much twine... in a trip, from Europe to North America. But in fact with all the chafing and the rot that takes place in sisal twine, they needed so many people available to keep things repaired, which is something we don't do because we have nylon now. But when I started making nets, for my father, they originally were out of sisal twine. And then, uh... a local, uh, business man by the name of Essau Levine employed some people from the local textile school, and they were unraveling big boxes of tire cord, nylon tire cord, very fine. And Essau had a few old... antiquated weaving machines, and he wove that tire cord into, uh... rope or twine, that

we could make nets out of. And that was the advent of nylon, which has... saved a phenomenal amount of work in the industry and made it work so well.

[06:05]

JGF: So it – it... it happened right here in New Bedford.

KD: Yeah, it happened here in New Bedford.

JGF: Huh! Interesting...

KD: And of course after that all the big people, DuPont and all those kind of people got into making twine.

JGF: Yeah!

KD: But prior to that, it was sisal twine.

JGF: Wow. Now where did sisal come from? Do you know?

KD: I don't... it's some type of an organic material...

JGF: Mm hmm... But overseas, you don't – was it grown locally, you don't know...

KD: Yeah, I don't know where that came from, yeah...

JGF: Yeah, okay, interesting, huh... would – you'd have to buy it, to – obviously.

KD: Yeah... yeah...

JGF: So, huh... now, when they started using the nylon versus the sisal, did that change anything about like the weight or how you would handle a net, or did it all...

KD: Oh, sure it did...

JGF: Yeah...

KD: Uh... after the use, after nylon came into vogue, the – the boats appeared to be much neater because they could stow the nets along the rails of the boats, you know...?

JGF: Oh, okay...

KD: But prior to that time, uh... you always had to hang the nets up from the mast, because if you didn't they were damp to start with and they had fish slime in them and they would rot.

JGF: Hmm!

KD: So they had to keep 'em up in there and dry 'em.

JGF: Wow.

KD: So... plus the fact there was much less work outside for the men, because the twine didn't break as easy.

JGF: You mean the nylon didn't...

KD: The sisal twine... would break very easily, you know?

JGF: Okay, so they were always mending them...

KD: Always mending and working on it.

JGF: Yup.

KD: After the advent of nylon, it was a much easier process.

JGF: Wow...

KD: You know?

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: The twine lasted longer...

JGF: Yeah...

KD: It didn't break as easy, it worked better.

JGF: Mm hmm... wow. Now it's interesting because I know that, I mean certainly people... a lot of people anyway lament some changes in the industry related to regulations and things, but changes such as that you would certainly see as positive.

KD: Oh, yeah. That was, that was a breakthrough.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: People don't think about it though, you know?

JGF: Right... right... And how – how big were those nets compared today's nets? Were they the same size?

KD: They're about the same size, and the meshes were the same size, and... yeah...

JGF: Yeah?... yeah... yeah... interesting.

KD: Yeah...

JGF: And the boats that your father had, were they wooden, or...?

KD: Yes.

JGF: What kind – were they like the old Eastern rig, or were they...?

KD: Yeah, they were...

[Knock at the door.]

JGF: Come in. Hold on for...

KD: They were... they were all Eastern rigs.

[08:22 – Break in recording]

JGF: ...kinds of boats.

KD: The style of boat.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: In those days, they were all wooden boats for the most part.

JGF: Yup.

KD: And they were Eastern rig boats.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And we built boats in Thomaston, Maine.

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: Uh... my father liked a shipbuilder up there by the name of Newbert and Wallace in Thomaston.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: And, uh, we built many boats up there.

JGF: Would they be like custom built for you kind of...?

KD: Yeah, they would be custom relative to... what the person having them built thought was a good boat, right?

JGF: Yeah?

KD: And that varied from, uh... owner to owner, right? But basically they were kind of the same.

JGF: Yup.

KD: The living quarters, the foc'sle was down forward, the engine room was aft, in the stern...

JGF: Yup... yup...

KD: And they seemed to be very seaworthy vessels.

JGF: Hmm... good. Do you remember what the names of them were? Did you...?

KD: Yeah. My father's – the boat we had, uh, we had a boat called the Elva Beal, we had a boat called, um... the Annie Jackson, we had one called the Four Brothers, the North Sea... uh, the Major Casey, uh... some of the new ones we built were the... uh, Kilkenney, the Shamrock, the Terranova...

JGF: Hmm...

KD: Hmm...

JGF: Was it a fun process picking out the names? I mean, did it get a lot of discussion or was it just...

KD: I don't know how they did that, you know...

JGF: Yeah, you don't, okay...

KD: ...I was young and that was kind of left to the, uh... the master of – of the game...

JGF: Okay...

KD: And they kinda decided on it but...

JGF: Yeah...

KD: Uh, Kilkenney, for instance, was where the Dawsons came from in Ireland.

JGF: Yeah?

KD: Uh... the Terranova is, uh... a Latin term for New Foundland.

JGF: Oh, right. Okay.

KD: Um... um, what's the other one? The Shamrock... Shamrock was – was named by one of my father's partners, a guy named Harry Swain.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: And, uh, he was a New Jersey Irishman, and he named it the Shamrock and that was that.

JGF: Okay.

KD: Four Brothers was named after another friend of my father, who had four sons.

JGF: Okay.

KD: So he named that the Four Brothers.

JGF: Huh.

KD: North Sea... was named by the original owner, and his name was Anderson.

JGF: Okay. I was gonna – that one didn't quite fit with the New Foundland heritage for me, so okay...

KD: Right... right... and, uh, the Major Casey we bought in Gloucester.

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: And I don't know how that one was named.

JGF: Yeah... yeah...

KD: We had another one called the Helen B, obviously that was named after somebody's lady up in Gloucester.

JGF: Yeah... so you would just keep those names, and...

KD: Right.

[11:14]

JGF: Yeah... now I never thought to ask this before, but if a boat was brand new, did you have like a christening thing?

KD: Yes, we did.

JGF: You would... yeah?

KD: Yeah, we had the christenings up in Thomaston where they were built.

JGF: Oh, okay!

KD: Kind of a buffet-type arrangement, you know?

JGF: Yeah?

KD: And, uh... everybody would go up there, and celebrate for half a day or a day, we'd go up the night before...

JGF: Yeah?

KD: That kind of thing, yeah.

JGF: Yeah? And would you break the bottle, or is that just...?

KD: Oh yeah, they had selected, uh... some of the, uh, usually children, um... my sister christened a couple, and some other young girls in, uh, related families christened others...

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: ...that's how it went...

JGF: Interesting...

KD: ...it was usually a lady though.

JGF: Oh, is it? That's interesting!

KD: Yeah. Almost always.

JGF: Huh. And that's funny because I know historically, wasn't it bad luck to have them on the boat but it was good luck to have them christen it?

KD: Well... well, yeah, my father, uh... was a very conservative guy, and – and, uh... I don't think I saw too many ladies on any of our boats. Or pictures of ladies.

JGF: Oh really!

KD: Yeah... yeah...

JGF: Not even pictures...

KD: I can remember one time that, uh... we just shipped the crew on one of our new boats, and... the cook had put up one of these risqué calendars, and my father came down, and I was just sitting down there having coffee or something and I kinda watched him and he saw that up on the wall, he took it down.

JGF: Oh, okay.

KD: Yeah, rolled it up and put it in the garbage.

JGF: Hah!

KD: Yeah.

JGF: While we're on that subject, do you know if he had any other like... beliefs, let's call it or things...

KD: Oh, yeah!

JGF: ...I know some people won't put the hatch cover upside...

KD: I was going out one trip with them, on one of my early voyages, and I was whistling. I was kinda happy to be there, and I was whistling, and we were working on deck putting together the – splicing wires that are used to tow the nets...

JGF: Yeah...

KD: And, uh... I looked up for some reason or I heard my father call me, he was a quiet guy, and he – he had called me into the pilot house and he said, uh... he said “that's superstitious” he said. “You can't be whistling with those guys,” he said “don't do any whistling”.

JGF: Wow...

KD: After that it was over, yeah.

JGF: You – you remembered after that.

KD: Yeah.

JGF: Yeah... I don't know if you've ever read any of William McCluskey's books, he – he wrote a lot, and in the novel Highliners there's an incident...

KD: Yeah.

JGF: ...and the kid keeps forgetting.

KD: Yeah.

JGF: I think the third time he does it they toss him overboard hooked to a line to teach him to remember. So...

KD: Yeah... was that the hatch cover routine?

JGF: No, that was the whistling.

KD: Whistling, yeah...

JGF: Yeah, he kept forgetting to whi– to not whistle, and so...

KD: Right... right... right...

JGF: Huh. But, so...

KD: And the hatch covers...

JGF: The dad would – your dad did the hatch cover? Yeah...

KD: Oh yeah... Uh... he wasn't... really a purveyor of superstition, but he was aware that, uh... seamen, and men in his crews, were, so...

JGF: Yes. Okay.

KD: ...you had to be careful about that, you know.

JGF: Okay. Huh... And were his crews, were they from a certain ethnic group or anything that you remember, or was it varied?

[14:26]

KD: We had, uh... I was thinking about that one day recently, and we had a cook who... Cur- his name was Curt Petersen, so I think he was Swedish. He was a former wrestler, great cook, nice guy. We had, uh... Portuguese guy who was an engineer, um... can't think of his name right now - Ezekiel Almeida was his name.

JGF: Oh!

KD: And then we had three or four New Foundlanders, you know. So it was kind of a mix but...

JGF: Right.

KD: Usually when you have new boats, you have... and you have a good skipper you get good men, you know?

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Good skippers get good men. Good boats get good men.

JGF: So your dad was a good... skipper... yeah.

KD: Well... yeah. So he had other skippers too, and...

JGF: Yeah... oh, okay. And what, in your view, makes a good skipper.

KD: There are three things that make – take a guy, I think, that take – make a successful, uh... operator of fishing vessels. They, uh, have to be a fishy person, which kinda has – is a sense, uh... to – it kinda drives you to go to certain areas, a feeling that works for you.

JGF: Oh.

KD: And you see it with fishermen who are not commercial. You see it with fishermen who catch trout up in the wilderness, or...

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: ...guys that catch salmon with flyrods. It's a – it's a thing they have.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Then it takes a couple of other things. You gotta be kind of a super mechanic, because there is no help, anywhere out there, with machinery, right? So you gotta know how to keep all your equipment running.

JGF: Right.

KD: And how to understand it, and not abuse it. And the third thing, you gotta be kind of a business – you gotta have a little business sense, because you gotta know when to land your fish. When to go out and get them, and when to land them.

JGF: Yup. And by landing them you mean sell them at auction or...not...

KD: Yes.

JGF: Yeah... yup. Mm hmm.

KD: Yeah, sell 'em at auction.

JGF: Okay.

KD: If you wait for the good weather, everybody goes.

JGF: Ahh!

KD: And... consequently everybody comes back at the same time. It's a perishable commodity.

JGF: Right.

KD: So... if you sell your fish when everybody sells, you're not going to get a lot of money for it.

JGF: Right.

KD: And if you sail when everybody sails, well that's what you're gonna get.

JGF: Right. By the good weather, do you mean warm versus cold or any other...

KD: Well, uh...human beings are prone to, uh... not abuse themselves too much...

JGF: Right.

KD: ...and to take, uh, take... the easier route, not that this business is easy for anybody.

JGF: Right.

KD: But, they wait for the weather to be good before they go.

JGF: Mmm. Yeah. Huh...

KD: So...

[17:35]

JGF: Huh. So how... how long were you actually involved in fishing trips?

KD: I was fishing from... on and off... I would say from '56, '57 till... uh, '65, '66, even after that I made some trips.

JGF: Uh huh. Yeah.

KD: I was um... maybe the seventies.

JGF: Yup.

KD: You know? Yeah... into the seventies.

JGF: And that whole time would have been in the wooden boats...

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Yeah.

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: Yeah... yeah...

JGF: Interesting... was it dragging that you were doing?

KD: Yes, I was doing dragging.

JGF: Uh huh. Wow...

KD: Yup.

JGF: Interesting...

KD: I never went scalloping.

JGF: No?

KD: No.

JGF: No...

KD: No, I never made a trip scalloping. Although today it's very lucrative.

JGF: Yeah! That's for sure. Yeah... well let's hope it stays, you never know, right?

KD: Well, it's a cyclical business.

JGF: Right... right...

KD: So... in those – in our day... most of the fleet was, uh... very versatile. They would if the dragging was bad and fish were scarce and prices were low, they would switch to lobstering or they would switch to scalloping. People were switching back and forth...

JGF: And the boats could...

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Just be set up to do that...

KD: Right. And I often thought that we didn't... we didn't control the fisheries, the quantity of fish, or abuse the quantity. The fish controlled us.

JGF: Yup.

KD: When the cycle was up, we were able to catch 'em. When the cycle was down, there wasn't anything we could do.

JGF: Right.

KD: We didn't overfish or underfish, it was dictated to us by how the fish reproduce themselves.

JGF: Right.

KD: You know? And that had been determined by water temperatures and things when they – when they spawn.

JGF: Right.

KD: So we would switch to another species when they got scarce. And then the species that got – that was scarce would in fact replenish itself because we wouldn't be directed at it.

JGF: Hmm...

KD: So... that was our way of – of... working with conservation. We – the fisheries dictated what we did.

JGF: Right.

KD: You know...?

JGF: Yeah...

KD: They – they – the fisheries conserve themselves.

JGF: Yup. Interesting... I do want to talk about your settlement house but before we switch to that, I just want to leave – it sounds like what you're talking about I'm curious what you think of the whole issue of reg- of the regulations today.

KD: What I think of the regulations...

JGF: Yeah [laughs]...

[20:01]

KD: Well... first of all you have to think about the new bureaucracy. When I was fishing there were two people who represented National Marine Fisheries Service in New Bedford, Paul Swain and Jack McCarthy. And, uh, they just asked you where you got your trip, uh... you know, what location and we gave them a location and that was it.

JGF: Yup.

KD: Licenses were free.

JGF: Wow.

KD: You didn't have to pay for any of your licenses, so... anybody that was in a business of - ease of entry, anybody could get in the business.

JGF: Yup.

KD: Uh... So, we have come from that situation to a situation where we are... uh, faced with many, many, many, many people representing National Marine Fisheries Service and con- and their ideas of conservation.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: So, it's not an exact science, it's a new science.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Newer particularly for those who are policing it.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: And making the decisions.

JGF: Cause they don't necessarily have the background, right?

KD: Well, it's only been ten years, or so...

JGF: Oh... true. Yeah.

KD: ...since we have entered it, to this type of relationship with National Marine Fisheries.

JGF: Mm... right.

KD: and that we are governed by what we can catch and when we can catch it. So... by fact, by definition, it is a new science. And they have to be guessing.

JGF: Yes... yup...

KD: Okay? We don't have – Europe has been at this much longer, we don't have anybody on our regulatory boards, uh... representing conservation with European experience. So, the people who run these boards were picked by uh... the political arena.

JGF: Mm hmm.

KD: Right?

JGF: Yup...

KD: And in the beginning maybe a lot of 'em didn't even know anything about the fisheries. So, we're wrestling with that. And their concept... of conservation. Uh... what do I think about it?... I think, uh, ultimately we'll end up with finer regulations than we have now. We're stumbling from one little problem area to another. The scallop industry looks like, uh... National Marine Fisheries Service and the scientists have done a remarkable job.

JGF: Mm hmmm...

KD: You know?

JGF: Yeah.

[22:43]

KD: They have limited entry. And it maybe we have limited entry in the fisheries now, so that limits the catching power. There aren't new people coming in, and years ago as I said licenses were free to those who wanted to go fishing.

JGF: Right.

KD: So, now you have limited entry. It's like the medallions that you need to get a cab in New York City, operate a cab or a liquor license to run a barroom, there's just so many of them.

JGF: Right.

KD: That's it. No new – there aren't any new ones being created so... whether or not the scallop... success is attributable to science or the very fact that the number of people catching them now is less than it has ever been.

JGF: Yeah. Huh...

KD: You see, if... if ease of entry was still available in the scallop industry, obviously everybody would be switching their boats to catch scallops.

JGF: Right.

KD: And they would certainly cut down the supply of scallops in a hurry.

JGF: Right.

KD: So, it's working quite well.

JGF: Mm hmm.

KD: And the fisheries, there are many more species involved, you know? So it's a more difficult game, you know, is the scarcity of codfish, uh, due to overfishing, or is it just a natural cycle?

JGF: Right.

KD: And some of these cycles are longer than our lifetime.

JGF: Yeah. So your - ten years is not a long time to determine...

KD: Right.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: We – the cod cycle – the cod cycle may be a hundred and twenty years or something.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: Who knows?

JGF: Right...

KD: So, we're in a learning phase. And, uh, I think the bad side of regulation is that... the concept of free enterprise... uh, is being erased.

JGF: Yup.

KD: You're not going to be able to come down here with ambition, go to work, save your money, and get a business going for yourself and your family, that's going to be a thing of the past. The capital required to get into the fisheries now...

JGF: Oh, yeah...

[25:01]

KD: ...the licenses, the costs of licenses, is unbelievable.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: They're talking about the costs of scallop licenses over a couple million dollars, just for a license that was free ten or fifteen years ago.

JGF: Is that for lifetime, or...?

KD: As long as you hold it, you – it's like any other commodity, you can buy and sell it.

JGF: A couple million dollars for the license?

KD: Yes... And dragger licenses are probably, I don't know, much less... maybe a couple hundred thousand dollars for a good license.

JGF: Oh my God, I didn't know...

KD: So, so the average guy coming to the waterfront to find his destiny, that's no more.

JGF: No!

KD: So, what will happen is that, if the Canadian experience is gonna be what happens here, there will be massive fleet operators.

JGF: Okay.

KD: Guys that can have the fortune to, and the money to maintain and buy up the licenses.

JGF: So it will be like agro-business in the agriculture...

KD: Yeah. It'll be the same as the farm.

JGF: Yup...

KD: The farm problem...

JGF: Wow...

KD: There will be many big – there are many big farms with few, uh, small operators. They can't compete. Well the same thing will happen.

JGF: And I assume somebody who holds a license can't like will it or deed it or anybody else.

KD: They have to sell it.

JGF: Yup. Mm hmm...

KD: However they want to sell it, whether they want to donate it or give it away, that's up to whoever owns it.

JGF: Oh, well they do have that, like if somebody wanted to give it to a son or something, but...

KD: Yeah... yeah...

JGF: Huh... wow... interesting...

KD: So that's the facet of regulation that, uh... is difficult to accept.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Because there are people moving into this industry now, who are not ocean-oriented, are not fishery people.

JGF: Yup.

KD: Who are buying up the licenses and operating vessels...

JGF: Hmm... just as business owners.

KD: Yup. So, they have the finances and the – and the clout to buy these licenses.

JGF: Wow. That's interest- I never... huh...

[27:29]

JGF: So, your settlement house before we run out of time and you have to go build fence...

KD: Yeah.

JGF: When – how and when did you get into the settlement business?

KD: Oh... that's an interesting story. Uh, I was fishing when I first got married, and that didn't fit in, uh, totally, with my new status in life, so I had to do something. Uh... I didn't want – I had worked in Wall Street, uh, for a CPA firm for awhile when I first got out of college, and I wasn't too keen on that, and I came back here. And, uh, I didn't want to go do that again. My father wasn't well, my mother wasn't well, so I said "what am I gonna do?" and we still owned a few vessels at that time, so I started a settlement business.

JGF: Huh!

KD: And, uh, I don't know, I had three or four or five boats when I started, and it gradually grew to where I was making a pretty good living. I think when I started I was fishing and working as a fish lumper and settling boats and that kind of thing and it finally became a full-time operation.

JGF: It did, okay, it just took on... Now when you say you had – you started, you had four or five boats, did you own them or were these...?

KD: Yeah.

JGF: Okay.

KD: Yeah. My family did.

JGF: Yup. Mm hmm... and I sort of understand the settling business. Is it... or maybe you just explain it. As I understand it, it's about figuring up the shares and – and all that after the trip. But maybe you can give us more details than that.

KD: It's a sophisticated payroll is what it is.

JGF: Okay.

KD: Based on people usually get paid based on their hours of performance, or the number of gadgets they produce in a given time. So, in the fishing business, what you catch is what you get paid on.

JGF: Right.

KD: And so if they come in with a hundred thousand pounds of fish and they get a dollar a pound we have a hundred thousand dollars to split off between the entity that owns the fishing vessel and the people who are running the fishing vessel, the crew.

JGF: Right.

KD: So, we split it up. And we subtract out the expenses that are part of the trip, right? So, uh, we take out, uh pers and ice and fuel and lumpers and things that are related to the cost of producing this trip. And then after we pay those, then we divide up the catch between the owner and the crew.

JGF: Okay. Now is the owner not necessarily the captain?

KD: That's true.

JGF: Right...

KD: And it's more so true today.

JGF: Oh, okay.

KD: And it will be exclusively true in the future.

[30:39]

JGF: Wow. Yeah... huh... Now who decides the split? Before anything else happens the split that goes to the owner. Is that – does the owner tell the settlement house or do you...?

KD: Well, the environment determines that.

JGF: It does...

KD: Uh, historically it was like a sixty-forty split and I think it evolved from the days when they fished in little boats and they took out so much money for the gasoline or the fuel and so much money for the food and they had one or two guys, crew members there...

JGF: Yup.

KD: ...and the skipper/owner would do that kind of thing.

JGF: Uh huh.

KD: So, then, when the fisheries got really developed, we had a really strong union here, and it would – sixty-forty split, forty percent for the owner and sixty percent for the crew.

JGF: Yup.

KD: And, uh, since that time, um... the union has kind of faded out of prominence, and so you see all kind of splits now, fifty-fiftys... but of course overhead has increased substantially in the past ten or fifteen years.

JGF: Yup.

KD: So they, they need more to operate these boats.

JGF: Yup.

KD: So, the owner determines it.

JGF: Yup.

KD: The guy who owns the boat determines how he's going to split out the profit.

JGF: Yeah... So a crewperson could either decide to sign on or find a split they liked better or something [laughs]

KD: Yeah, after they – after they're there for a trip and they find out what's going, then they either like it or they don't like it, and then they move on. Right...

JGF: So the process is the boats comes in...

KD: Right.

JGF: Sells its catch.

KD: Yes.

JGF: At what point – where – when – at what point does the settlement house come into the whole picture?

KD: Well, the skipper usually calls us in the morning with his crew.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And, uh... by that time, fuel bill has come into the office.

JGF: Okay...

KD: And the ice bill, 'cause they put the ice on before they go out.

JGF: Mm hmm, so the bills come directly to your office.

KD: The bills come to my – my office.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: We have, uh... check books for almost every vessel. And, uh, so then based on the amount of money they get, we know their formula for dividing it, and we talk in the morning with the owner and the captain if there are any things that are – are different or peculiar to this trip that we should know, and then we do that.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: We split it up, and make out the checks and the owner comes in and signs the checks.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And then the crew comes by, and they pick up theirs.

JGF: It's all the same day, right?

KD: Yeah. Usually...

JGF: So as soon as the catch is sold the owner calls and tells you...

KD: Right. Usually within an hour or so.

JGF: Wow.

KD: And remember, these guys are anxious to get paid.

JGF: Right.

KD: And go on their way.

JGF: Yeah [laughs] So your hours are not necessarily standard office hours then.

KD: Yeah, they are.

JGF: They are?

KD: They are. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah...

KD: When... when I first started in this crazy business, it was a seven day a week business. We had auctions right here in that building seven days a week. Then it dropped to no auctions on Saturday or Sunday, and now, and everything took place in the daytime. Now, uh, they come in all times of the day or night, with a new auction process, and they unload at night as well as in the daytime. So when we open in the morning sometimes there are people there with proceeds from unloading the prior night, and we take care of them.

[34:19]

JGF: Wow... Now, what's the name... does your business have a name?

KD: Yeah. I, uh... few years back, 'bout twenty years back, took in partner. My name...the business originally was Dawsons Boat Settlements.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And now it's Jardin and Dawson.

JGF: Okay.

KD: I took in Ann Jardin as a partner. She worked for me...

JGF: Uh huh.

KD: And so, it's called Jardin and Dawson.

JGF: Mm hmm. So is it just the two of you that do all this or do you have like people that...?

KD: I have five people in there, yeah.

JGF: Wow... wow. And how many boats now? Or I don't know if that's private information but...?

KD: We have... yeah. We have a lot of boats.

JGF: Yeah? A lot?

KD: I'm not sure whether we have eighty, or something like that. Something like that.

JGF: Wow... yeah. Huh.

KD: And we have people that... just come for the settlements, they may be here just for the summer...

JGF: Oh, okay.

KD: ...they come up from down South.

JGF: Okay.

KD: And they – and they fish for scallops here in the summertime.

JGF: I see.

KD: That kind of thing.

JGF: So it's not, I mean, the New Bedford fleet is one thing but there might be other boats coming in...

KD: And we have other shore side facilities that we do work for as – as well, you know. We just don't...

JGF: Oh. Like you hold books for other businesses?

KD: Yeah. Doctors, lawyers, and Indian chiefs.

JGF: Oh wow! Wow...

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Is that a new development in the...

KD: No, kind of...

JGF: No? That's always been...

KD: Kind of... you pick up clients as you go through, you know.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: I've been at it since, uh... god, I don't know. I guess, uh... the seventies?

JGF: Wow... yeah. So you've really seen the ups and downs, then.

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Of the industry...

KD: Right...

JGF: How does the settlement house actually get paid? Is that a portion of the catch too?

KD: They pay us by the month.

JGF: By the month, yeah. So it's a regular rate regardless of how much...

KD: It's a fee, yeah, base on what we think we need...

JGF: Yeah.

KD: You know, to make a buck on it.

JGF: Okay... interesting. So, if the – if the fish economy, like if they're not catching a lot you'll still get your monthly fee. It's not like...

KD: Right... right.

JGF: Yeah. 'Cause otherwise how would you stay in business I guess...

KD: Yeah... well, uh... we're doing a lot of things besides the settlements, all the unemployment forms, all their mail comes into our, but – you can't deliver mail to a fishing boat. Think about it.

JGF: Oh! Alright.

KD: Right? How do you deliver mail to a fishing boat?

JGF: Okay...

KD: It's a... it all comes to our address for eighty or ninety or however many boats we have.

JGF: Wow... so you're like the main support center.

KD: So...

JGF: ...for the boat.

KD: And then it's all divided up and filed away in their folders so when they come in we can take care of whatever they have to do.

JGF: Oh, alright. Interesting...

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Huh...

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Wow... and you ment- is your business in that building? You said you own the oldest building...

KD: Yeah, right across the street.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: On the corner.

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Yeah... wow...

KD: On the corner of Union and Route 18.

[37:13]

JGF: Huh... so have the changes in technology over the last twenty, thirty years affected how your business works?

KD: Oh yeah...

JGF: Yeah? In what ways?

KD: The advent of computers, right?

JGF: Oh, okay.

KD: It took us a month to tally up all of the vessels' production and each individual's share of that production, all the crewmen's wages.

JGF: Hmmm...

KD: It took us a good month to have five or six people do it.

JGF: Wow...

KD: Now we do that in a matter of minutes.

JGF: Wow.

KD: Maybe twenty minutes or something.

JGF: Is there...

KD: The settlements are computerized, all the data is stored, so...

JGF: Is there special software that's been developed for that?

KD: Oh, yes. Yes.

JGF: Wow.

KD: A lot of special software.

JGF: Huh.

KD: Right...

JGF: Fascinating. Interesting...

KD: Yup...

JGF: Well, is there anything else that you would want us to know that I haven't thought to ask you about? I don't know...

KD: I don't know, um... It's an interesting business. It's going though change. Your questions are interesting, particularly the effect of the new regulations on the fisheries...

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: How that's gonna work out...

JGF: Right...

KD: Uh... I think it will be like the farming business, I think they...

JGF: Yeah.

KD: The major portion of the fisheries will be controlled by very few people.

JGF: Hmmm...

KD: You know? And, uh, I don't think the product to the consumer will ever be as cheap as it has been in the past.

JGF: Huh... interesting.

KD: And, uh, it's like the scallops now, you know?

JGF: Yeah.

KD: Scallops in the store may be twelve bucks a pound or something.

JGF: Yeah. I don't – I can't eat scallops so I don't pay too – but yeah, they are...

KD: They're very expensive...

JGF: I know from people who love 'em it's – it's a luxury.

KD: Yeah, they're very expensive, so...

JGF: Yeah.

KD: And fish is very expensive. And I think that the regulations are propagating this.

JGF: Right... by the expenses they cause to the boats and...

KD: Uh, we're supporting a big bureaucracy.

JGF: Right. Oh, right!

KD: And the fastest growing bureaucracy, uh... in US government.

JGF: Mm hmm...

KD: And, uh... I think it has to be paid for.

JGF: Wow...

KD: I don't know...

[39:44]

JGF: Yeah... So would you recommend that a young person go into the industry today?

KD: I don't think a young person can advance in the industry.

JGF: Right...

KD: Uh, I think there's opportunities for young people to work here...

JGF: Mm hmmm....

KD: Work hard, but their chances of becoming a sole proprietor or owner of a business are becoming extremely limited and will get worse as it goes.

JGF: Hmm... wow...

KD: Right?

JGF: Yeah... and what do you foresee happening with your business when you're ready to retire? Will you sell it, do you think? Will you be able to, or...?

KD: Well, I'm working on a – I'm working only on right now Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

JGF: Uh huh...

KD: And what I'm thinking of doing is continuing doing that for a couple of years. And then I'm going to give the business to my partner.

JGF: Oh!

KD: Walk away...

JGF: Wow...

KD: I'm sixty-six, so that will make it about... maybe I'll be sixty-eight.

JGF: Yeah? Wow...

KD: You know?

JGF: Hmm... well, you wear it well [laughs]

KD: So...

JGF: So... interesting...

KD: Yeah...

JGF: Okay, well thank you so much. I don't know if that...

KD: Thank you.

JGF: Alright, I appreciate it, and good luck building the fences.

KD: Yeah.

JGF: Okay.

KD: Thank you very much.

JGF: You're welcome, thank you.

KD: Yup. Bye.

JGF: Bye bye. Did you get...

[41:03 – END]